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THE DUTY OF ALTRUISM. By Ray Madding McConnell. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1910. Pp. v, 255.

The old ethics of obligation took the objectivity of moral categories for granted, and merely set out to provide this objectivity with a suitable philosophical ground. The present-day ethics of the type represented by Dr. McConnell's book swings to the other pole and asserts that all conduct is a purely subjective matter, that there is no objective standard of ethical evaluation. How is one, then, to prove the duty of altruism? This is the writer's problem, and Chapters II-VIII of the book (pp. 19-172) are devoted to "an investigation of the various doctrines that have been proposed as solutions to this problem of converting egoism into altruism" (p. 15). Theological ethics, in seeking to base altruism upon the commandment of God, is involved in an unavoidable circle: "The rightness of the revelation is attested by its divine origin, and its divine origin is attested by its rightness" (p. 21). In metaphysical ethics the ground of obligation is placed in a noumenal world, and its absolute authority is deduced from its transcendent character. But belief in the metaphysical postulates is just as indispensable here as belief in God is in the case of theological ethics,—and the metaphysical solution is, therefore, just as artificial. The effort to ground altruism upon the external authority of law is obviously futile: the law can punish the aggressive egoist; it cannot make him altruistic. The theories offered by some ethical logicians start by gratuitously assuming their major premises. The 'good' cannot be grounded rationally; "no one knows what is right or wrong except by reference to will and experience" (p. 96). As for the various 'scientific' solutions of the problem of egoism and altruism, they are valuable as explanations of moral phenomena; but they cannot show why altruism *ought* to be preferred. The scientist cannot evaluate; he is limited to description. "Psychology has done a great deal towards *explaining* the rise and development of altruistic feelings, ideas, and volitions, but it is wholly incapable of convincing an individual who happens not to be altruistic that he *ought* to be altruistic" (pp. 114-115). Similarly, physiology endeavors to study the rise of instincts in human nature. But to convince an egoist that the fraction of altruism he happens to possess is a mere matter of instinct would not strengthen that instinct, but would

rather tend to disorganize it. Evolution, likewise, has traced the development of altruistic sentiments, and identifies the moral ideal with the trend of nature. And Dr. McConnell insists that the descriptive and historical branch of evolutionistic ethics "has probably made a larger contribution to ethical *science* than all other schools together" (p. 172). But "to describe the way men have acted in the past is a very different matter from saying how they *ought* to have acted, or how they ought to act in the future" (p. 170).

All these efforts to provide the duty of altruism with a theoretical basis, Dr. McConnell concludes, are unavailing: it is impossible to reason men into being egoistic or altruistic. Nor can we ground ethical obligation upon the philosophical hybrid of reason-and-will. It is a confusion to speak of the intellect as a dynamic agency, a motor principle, or a force in any sense of the word as Fouillée does in his doctrine of *idées-forces*. Schopenhauer-wise, Dr. McConnell asserts: "The will is the primary force; the intellect is a secondary force" (p. 183). "Intelligence is accessory to will, and is without moral significance except as it enables the will better to accomplish itself" (p. 185).

Dr. McConnell accepts Schopenhauer's doctrine of the will-to-live. But, in Chapter X of his book, he emphasizes the variety of the forms in which the will-to-live, as he conceives it, expresses itself. Altruism is the expression of "the will to live the largest life." Egoism is the mark of abnormal men. Scientific ethics can recognize egoism as abnormality, but it cannot convert the egoist to altruism. "A man's 'moral nature' is not the result of his 'free choice' any more than is the original size of his liver" (p. 245). The moralist must abandon the futile effort to make bad men good, and spend his energy on showing good men how best to carry out their good will.

The reader will find the book very interesting in providing readable summaries of some recent ethical theories. In his own constructive work, too, Dr. McConnell is straightforward and to the point; he accepts the consequences of his position without any hesitation. Nevertheless, while it is true that ethics must constantly keep in contact with actual experience, this does not mean that it should abandon all objective standards. Dr. McConnell says: "The particular nature of the particular individual at a particular time and under particular circumstances is the fact from which moral science must start" (p. 192). But this four-

fold particularity by itself can in no sense be called material for science of any sort. If ethics is to cease being 'normative' and become purely 'scientific,' 'descriptive,' then it must follow the method of all 'descriptive' science. And this means that it must discover in its particular 'facts' the universal meaning by virtue of which alone the empirical datum becomes a fact significant for science. Dr. McConnell follows Schopenhauer and seeks to improve upon his master by amplifying the notion of the will-to-live. But Schopenhauer himself recognizes that, once we leave reason behind, science becomes impossible. Descriptive science aims at objective truth, at universally valid conclusions. Dr. McConnell's descriptive ethical science is doubtless descriptive of the way in which Dr. McConnell's own will to live the largest life functioned at the particular time and under the particular circumstances of writing his book. But it is not ethical science. The science of ethics demands, not the *Gegenüberstellung* of 'subjective' and 'objective,' 'descriptive' and 'normative,' 'will' and 'reason,' but the study of their interrelation and mutual significance in the one world of concrete reality.

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RELIGION AND IMMORTALITY. By G. Lowes Dickinson. London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1911. Pp. vii, 87.

This is a little book, but full of great things. It has all the sincerity, charm, and depth of Mr. Dickinson's writings, and it deals with the most important concerns of life. In the main it might be described as a plea for 'the open door,' a plea the more weighty because the writer never allows himself to overstate his case. He feels intensely the connection between belief and action, a connection often thrust out of sight, but always present: he realizes, and makes us realize, that the old question, Is life worth living? is one that cannot be laughed aside, and that the answer, for rational creatures, depends on our hopes about the universe itself. But he is very careful not to say, "Therefore, since hope is so important, let us insist on taking a hopeful view of things, whether that view commends itself to our reason or not." He asks himself, it is true, what vision of hope it is that could make men feel it possible to accept life and all its fardels with con-